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The PROPHECY

A PLAY

Of the Days of Persecution
Under Henry VIII
of England.

(For Male Characters.)

BY

Rev. Arthur T. Coughlan, C. SS. R.

ST. MARY'S COLLEGE,
NORTHEAST, PENNA.



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A PLAY

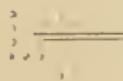
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CHARACTERS.

HENRY PERCY, Earl of Northumberland.

EDMUND, son of the Earl.

RICHARD PERCY, nephew of the Earl.

JOHN HOUGHTON, Prior of the London Charter House.

HUMPHREY MIDDLEMORE, oldest of the Carthusians.

SEBASTIAN NEWDIGATE, youngest of the Carthusians.

WILLIAM, an old retainer of the Northumerlands.

ROBERT, }
THOMAS, } Servants in the Northumberland family

LAYTON LEGH, a lay servant of the Charter House.

ROBIN RUFF, a gaoler in the Tower of London.

CROMWELL, a captain of soldiers.

FIRST OLD SAILOR.

SECOND OLD SAILOR.

FIRST YOUNG SAILOR.

SECOND YOUNG SAILOR.

MESSENGER.

Carthusian Monks, Soldiers, Peasants, Rabble.

SKETCH OF THE PLAY.

Act I.

Anno Domini 1535. A drawing-room in Percy Hall, the manor house of the Northumerlands. Servants' frolic rebuked by Richard. The latter's base ambition. The Earl and Richard plot the death of the Charter House monks and the robbery of the monastic property. Edmund is commissioned by his father to carry to the Carthusians an important royal document. Northumberland pleads in vain with his son to take the Supremacy Oath.

Act II.

Scene 1. Chapter Hall of the Charter House. Richard enlists the aid of Layton Legh for the furtherance of his schemes. General assembly of the Carthusian community. The Prior informs the monks of the King's demand that they take the Supremacy Oath. The brethren all refuse the Oath. Whilst the Carthusians are engaged in prayer, a band of soldiers led by the Earl, and followed by a mob, break into the monastery. The monks elect to die rather than swear the sacrilegious Oath. The Prior's prophecy. The Carthusians are conducted off to prison.

Scene 2. A cell in the Tower of London. The Prior in chains. Edmund's repentance for having yielded to his father's entreaties to take the Oath. The Prior's second prophecy. Soldiers lead away the Prior to execution at Tyburn. Layton Legh worms from gaoler an account of Edmund's colloquy with the Prior.

Act III.

Scene 1. An apartment in Percy Hall. Servants revenge themselves on Layton Legh. Northumberland rejoices over his prospects for the future. Legh, after exacting a promise of reward, reveals to the Earl his son's renunciation of the Supremacy

Oath and intention of fleeing from England. Edmund meets his father, and retracts his oath, and manifests his determination to leave home. The Earl in a blind rage attempts to kill his son. Edmund flees. Richard hastens to denounce his cousin to the authorities. Northumberland's remorse.

Scene 2. A wharf on the seaboard of England. A sailor's yarn, and a song of the sea. Richard and the Earl trace Edmund's steps to the dock of a seaport, only to find that he has just taken ship for France. Farewell letter of Edmund to his father. Grief of the latter.

Act IV.

Scene 1. A. D. 1545, ten years later. Former chapter hall of the Charter House, which latter is at present the city residence of the Earl of Northumberland. Edmund, now a priest, has returned to England by commission of the Pope. He visits his father's home. The hallowed chapter hall awakens in him sweet and bitter memories. He prays for the conversion of his father. Richard recognizes his cousin, and hurries away to fetch the soldiers for his arrest. After Edmund's departure from the room, the Earl enters, and discloses intense bitterness of soul. He prays to our Lady to bring back his son. Layton breaks in upon him, and boldly demands the money promised years before by Northumberland. The latter refuses to accede to the demand, and endeavors to oust Layton. Layton draws dagger and stabs the Earl. Servants seize the assassin, and hold him for the police. Edmund absolves his father. Death of Earl. Richard enters, and at sight of dead body recalls fearfully the Prior's prophecy. Edmund strives in vain to rouse his cousin to repentance. Entrance of soldiers. Layton confesses his crime. Edmund is arrested. William gives himself up to a martyr's death. Edmund and William are led off to the Tower. Remorse and fear haunt Richard's soul.

Scene 2. A woods in the suburbs of London. Edmund and William have escaped from prison

through the aid of Robin Ruff, and are fleeing to the sea-coast to board a vessel leaving England. Richard comes upon them in wild terror and remorse. He beholds in imagination the execution of Edmund. Stabs himself. Edmund, at the sacrifice of his life, endeavors to save his cousin's soul. Richard dies in despair. Soldiers rush in upon Edmund, and prepare to lead him directly to the place of execution. Edmund in prayer is comforted by a vision of heaven. "Now dost Thou dismiss Thy servant, O Lord, according to Thy word, in peace."



THE PROPHECY.

Act I.

Time—Anno Domini 1535. Evening.

SCENE—A drawing-room in Percy Hall, the manor house of the Earl of Northumberland. A military cloak, a sword belt, and a coronet lie on a table.

Servant Thomas. (Short and stout. Polishing the Earl's sword.) My lord returns home late as usual. (Replaces sword in scabbard. Looking at the military cloak, etc., on table.) I wonder how I would look in these trappings. (Robes himself in long cloak.) This does not quite suit my shape. (He places coronet on his head, and squeezes the sword-belt about his waist. Admiring himself.) Ah! why was I not born the son of a duke!

Servant Robert. (Tall and thin. Entering L.) Ha, ha, ha.

Thomas. (Brandishing sword.) Can I believe my ears? Ha-haing at the Duke of Lancaster! Avaunt base fellow, or by my blue blood I will pierce thy entrails with this blade.

Robert. (Sneering.) You'd make a fine looking duke, Tom.

Thomas. I wouldn't need the looks if I were a genuine duke. Most of the noblemen that

come to Percy Hall haven't any beauty to spare. There was one here this morning, the Earl of Sussex, a live scarecrow. By the way, Bob, he looks very much like you.

Robert. Like me? My mother always said I was the handsomest baby in Yorkshire.

Thomas. Then some one must have stolen your good looks from you when you were asleep in the cradle.

Robert. If I had your figure I'd never look into a mirror.

Thomas. And if I had your face I'd break the mirror.

Robert. Now, Tom, supposing you were a lord, what would you do?

Thomas. What would I do? What wouldn't I do? (Sings—each verse is repeated as a duet.)

I'd like to be a lord,
Own castle, lake, and land,
Wear helmet, shield, and sword,
Ah! wouldn't that be grand?

I'd like to be a lord,
And have no work to do;
What pleasure 'twould afford!
I'd like it, wouldn't you?

Richard Percy. (Entering L.) Why this noise? Ah, masquerading with the Earl's apparel! I shall take good care to inform his lordship what dutiful servants he possesses. If I were master here, you two loafers would leave this house quicker than the twinkling of an eye. (Exit R.)

Thomas. (Addressing the departed Richard.) And if I were master here, you would leave this house quicker than 'twould take a bonfire to scorch a wren's feather. (Doffs coronet.)

Robert. I wonder if Sir Edmund will be able to stave off our discharge this time.

Thomas. I don't care a whit. If it were not for Sir Edmund, I'd have left long ago. (Takes off belt.)

Robert. (Listening L.) Hurry, Tom. His lordship has arrived; I hear his voice. (Robert hastens towards Exit R. followed by Thomas, the latter still wearing the long cloak and carrying coronet and sword-belt. At Exit R. they bump into Richard.)

Richard. Clumsy gawks! (Robert and Thomas off stage laugh loudly at Richard. The latter looking towards R.) If I were only the lord of the manor! (Musing.) A little patience! Edmund, the imbecile, will not block my path much longer. That fanatical conscience of his will allure him straight into the snare of high treason. Then! (Conveys by pantomime the idea of beheading.) The old man will quickly follow his dear boy to the grave—and (Dances about.) fol de rol de rol de rol, I'll be the Earl of Northumberland. (Listens L.) Ah! (Composes himself. The Earl enters L. Richard hastens to greet him.) Good evening, uncle. I was just hurrying down to meet you.

Earl. Thank you, Richard. I am glad you came. I have a commission of importance I

desire to entrust to you. Be seated. (They seat themselves at a table, and opposite to each other.) Richard, I feel I can rely on you.

Richard. Command anything of me, except to become a monk.

Earl. Oh, no fear of that. To come to the point, you remember our conversations concerning the Charter House? (Richard nods assent.) Well, my plans are working smoothly. The King has at last consented to make over to me the monastery and its revenue. Of course, he expects a nice present in return for his kindness. The next move is to send to the Carthusians a copy of the Supremacy Oath which the King commands them to take under penalty of confiscation of their monastery and death. I shall have my son bear the document to the Prior.

Richard. I understand. But what if they agree to take the Oath?

Earl. Never! I know Prior John and his monks; they would sooner die than accept the King as Head of the Church.

Richard. Pious fools!

Earl. There is only one hitch in the scheme. I have had agents spying about the neighbourhood, and they assure me that the common people, especially the poor, are so devoted to the Carthusians, that a popular uprising would follow their eviction from the monastery.

Richard. Yes, the monks put bread into their hungry mouths. (After a slight pause.)

Uncle, a well-organized campaign of slander and bribery will check all outbreaks of the rabble.

Earl. (Puzzled.) Campaign of slander and bribery?

Richard. Yes, spread broadcast all manner of scandals about the Carthusians.

Earl. I am not aware of any scandals connected with the Charter House.

Richard. (Laughing.) Invent some. Din them in the ears of the mob, over and over again, in season and out of season; before long these lies will come to be regarded as the truth, at least by the most dull-witted. At the same time scatter lots of gold, some of it to loose the mouths of scandal-mongers and some of it to close the mouths of those who would resent any outrage on their holy monks.

Earl. (After nodding approvingly.) Richard, I must confess I have never given you sufficient credit for cleverness.

Richard. If you allow me the use of your money, I will carry out this scheme.

Earl. Go ahead, I trust you. I am anxious to strike the iron while it is hot. To-morrow afternoon you follow Edmund to the Charter House.

Richard. To-morrow afternoon! That's too soon. Allow a few days start to my campaign.

Earl. Very true. Well, Friday then. By hook or crook you must manage to see and hear all that takes place after they open the

King's document. I shall station myself with some troops at the barracks nearby; in case the monks refuse to take the Oath, notify me at once, and I shall hasten to the monastery and hustle them off to prison.

Richard. A good idea. I must think out some way of acting the spy on them.

Earl. (Both rise.) Richard, I cannot express how grateful I am to you. Rest assured you will be richly rewarded for your services. Would you kindly summon Edmund to my presence?

Richard. I shall do so at once.

Earl. (Musing.) I had no right to drag my son into this affair. He idolizes the Carthusians.

Richard. It will do no harm to make Edmund a partner in our guilt.

Earl. Our guilt!

Richard. A spade is a spade, uncle.

Earl. Well, it is for his interest I am planning as well as for mine.

Richard. (Aside.) For mine too. (To Earl.) Good night, uncle. Happy dreams!

Earl. Good night, Richard. (Exit Richard R.) Yes, I was too anxious to display the Northumberland loyalty, when I assured the King that I would have my own son bear the royal document to the Charter House. I do wish Edmund had more of Richard's shrewdness and knowledge of the world. The boy is too serious-minded. I must take him away

from his books, and launch him into the pleasures of the court, and in that sea of sensual dissipation his fanaticism and superstition will be quickly drowned. (Knock at the door.) Come in! (Edmund enters R. Earl affectionately.) My dear boy!

Edmund. (After embracing Earl.) Welcome home, father.

Earl. Thank you, Edmund.

Edmund. Had I known of your arrival, no messenger were needed to call me. I do hope, father, that you will remain at home for some time; I see so little of you lately. How different from the old days when we used to ramble through the woods or ride together over the country roads. A feeling haunts me that those happy days will never return.

Earl. Do you not realize, my son, that my position often requires my presence at court? Besides, I am a growing favorite with the King.

Edmund. They say at Oxford, it is a dangerous thing to be a favorite of Henry.

Earl. (Laughing.) I know what they mean. Do not fear, I have sense enough to trim my sails to the royal whims. Between ourselves, Edmund, I am not in love with the King, but I am making hay while the sun shines. Only last evening His Majesty granted me—I cannot tell you the particulars now; I shall explain later.

Edmund. You must be fatigued after your journey from London; perhaps you wish to

retire. We shall see each other to-morrow.

Earl. Yes, I am tired. But since we are alone, I must tell you of a message I wish you to bear. Be seated. (Both seat themselves.) I have here (Taking paper from pocket.) a sealed document from the King to the Prior of the London Charter House.

Edmund. To my old friend, Prior John?

Earl. Yes, a very important document; I would not entrust it to anyone but you. Will you deliver it into the hands of the Prior to-morrow—no, Friday afternoon?

Edmund. (Taking paper and putting it into coat pocket.) I am only too willing to comply. You know my greatest happiness when we resided in the city, was to visit the Charter House. How keenly I have felt your forbidding me to see the good monks!

Earl. You are aware, Edmund, how I always have your interest at heart. The Carthusians were spoiling you. I am sure that they bewitched your mind with the silly notion that it would be wrong to take the Supremacy Oath.

Edmund. No, father, my own intelligence and my own conscience forbid me to swear to a sacrilegious oath. If the greatest of English prelates, Bishop Fisher, and the greatest English layman, Sir Thomas More, have refused—

Earl. But, my son, the King will have his way. Refusal to take the Oath means confiscation of property and death. Surely we are not

expected to sacrifice everything, even our life, for the sake of—

Edmund. Yes, even life itself for our faith, for our soul. (Rising.) I will never take that Oath.

Earl. (Rising.) What!

Edmund. I will never swear the Supremacy Oath. (Richard takes a hasty look from window in rear of stage.)

Earl. But my son, I say you must, you must.

Edmund. Father, why do you tempt me to sacrifice my soul?

Earl. Because I love you. If King Henry knew that you refused the Supremacy Oath, all my influence woud avail nothing to save you from death.

Edmund. (Throwing his arms about Earl's neck.) Father, let us both die together for our faith.

Earl. (Separating himself from Edmund.) Edmund, leave me, leave me alone. (Exit R. Edmund.) What a noble son, what a miserable father! (Earl continues in deep thought.) An angel and a demon are contending for my soul, and I—I despise myself—I am helping the demon to conquer. Northumberland, you are a coward. Retrace my steps, undo the wrong? Too late. I have set the engine of destruction in motion; I could not check it if I would. (Pauses, then with determination.) Let it run its bloody course to the end. Let it crush the Carthusians; let it crush all who stand in its path. (Pauses.) "I will never

take that Oath." But the King, the King! My son die? No, no, no! (Hastens to Exit R and calls.) Edmund, Edmund!

Edmund. (At some distance.) Father!

Earl. (Calling.) Come here, my boy. (Musing.) What would life be to me without Edmund? (Edmund enters R. Earl places his hands affectionately on Edmund's shoulders. Pleading.) You will swear the Oath?

Edmund. I cannot, even if I have to die.

Earl. But you must not die, you must live. (Richard appears at window and remains until curtain falls.) Edmund, my child, (Falls on one knee and grasps Edmund's left hand.) take the Oath for my sake, for your father's sake.

Edmund. Father, father. (Hesitates a little as though his resolution were weakening, then raises right hand to heaven.) No, before my God I declare—never!

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

Scene 1.

Time—Several days later.—Afternoon.

SCENE—Chapter Hall of the Charter House. Contains a desk and benches, as also a statue of the Blessed Virgin; the statue is adorned with candles and flowers, and before it is placed a prie-dieu.

Layton. (Looking out of window in rear of stage.) There they are still, whispering together; the Prior holds a document in his hand.

What may that document be, I wonder? (Sees a person coming.) What does this old man want? (Addressing the person.) This is not the reception room. Go down to the gate and ring the bell.

Richard. (Outside, disguised.) Please help a poor old man!

Layton. A beggar! I am too busy to-day to bother with the like of you. Come some other time.

Richard. A good disguise, I see. Layton Legh, your eyesight is failing. Don't you know Richard Percy?

Layton. Richard Percy! Yes, it is you. By the way, are you aware it was I who carried you home last Saturday night? You were as drunk as a lord.

Richard. Let me in, Layton. I have something very important to communicate to you.

Layton. Slip in quietly without the Prior noticing you—this is the chapter hall.

Layton. (Opens the door and admits Richard.) What has possessed you to masquerade in this character? "Please help a poor old man," ha, ha, ha!

Richard. (Removes disguise.) Not so loud, or I shall be detected.

Layton. Detected! Can I be dreaming? A few moments ago your cousin, Sir Edmund, called to see the Prior on important business, he said. You must have observed them in the garden. And now to make the matter more

puzzling, you come here disguised as an aged pauper. Tell me, what does all this mean?

Richard. Layton, you can be a rich man in a short time.

Layton. A rich man! Layton Legh a rich man! (Dances in glee.) I must be dreaming. (Catches Richard.) Is this you, Richard Percy?

Richard. Don't act like a lunatic.

Layton. Tell me, how can I become a rich man?

Richard. Will you do what I ask?

Layton. Anything, anything, I would even kill you for money, ha, ha.

Richard. (Listening.) I hear footsteps outside. (Layton goes to window and looks out.)

Layton. They are coming this way. Sir Edmund looks as depressed as a man whose head is framed in the hangman's noose.

Richard. Will they pass through this hall?

Layton. (Lowering his voice.) No, but speak in a whisper; the two are almost directly beneath this window.

Edmund. (Outside.) Father, it breaks my heart to think that I have brought their death-warrant to those I love so dearly.

Prior. Edmund, I forbid you to speak thus. God knows that you are as innocent in this affair as I am.

Edmund. I will move heaven and earth to save you. I will hasten at once to my father—

Prior. No, my child, only One can save us. I know the Earl of Northumberland. I know the King. No, none but God can prevent the sacrifice. His holy will be done!

(Richard and Layton watch for a few moments the retreating figures of the Prior and Edmund.)

Richard. Cousin Edmund, you will soon need to move heaven and earth to save your own—(Breaks off sentence, as he observes Layton staring at him.)

Layton. (To Richard.) What does all this mean?

Richard. You wouldn't mind spreading some lies about the Carthusians?

Layton. All the lies you wish. But say, who will pay me the money?

Richard. The Earl and myself. I pledge my word.

Layton. Humph! Your word, your word?

Richard. Do you doubt me?

Layton. Remember, if you or the Earl break your promise, you will pay for it with—you will hear from Layton Legh.

Richard. We must without delay inflame the common people against the monks. I have already bought over a few. Now I want you—(The community bell sounds six strokes.) What means that ringing?

Layton. That is the usual call for a chapter or general assembly of the monks.

Richard. Then I presume they will be here presently. I shall have to wait till evening to

unfold to you my plans and explain what part you are to play. (Takes money from purse and gives it to Layton.) Here, take this as a beginning of your fortune.

Layton. (Counting money carefully.) Coin of the realm! My stars! All mine, and more to come.

Richard. Very likely the Prior is summoning his subjects to consider the Supremacy Oath. Layton, I came here expressly to find out how they receive the King's document. Is there no place in this chapter hall where I can secrete myself?

Layton. Not without their observing you. Why not remain outside the hall, and keep the door open a little, and listen?

Richard. Yes, I presume that would be the safest plan.

Layton. This way, I hear them coming.
(*Exeunt L. Layton and Richard.*)

(After a few moments the monks enter R quietly and take their usual places, Father Humphrey, the senior of the community, being assisted by two younger members. Behind the rest follows the Prior who proceeds to his desk. The Prior first and then the others seat themselves.)

Prior. My brethren, the long threatening storm is about to break over our beloved home; the day of trial has come which is to prove whether we are ready to follow our Divine Master, not only amid the quiet solitude of Mt. Olivet, but also on the way of suffering to Mt. Calvary. The King has sent us the Oath of

Supremacy by which he is proclaimed Head of the Church in England. To obey His Majesty, to acknowledge Henry as Head of God's Church, would be a denial of the belief of the ages, would be disobedience to the Holy Ghost, would be treason against Jesus Christ. Will we desert the King of heaven and earth for the King of England? But, my dear brethren, you must know the whole truth. To refuse this Oath, to refuse to acknowledge Henry as Head of the Church, will entail confiscation of our monastery and death. You have your choice, loss of property on earth or loss of your possessions in heaven, loss of this mortal life or loss of the immortal life to come. Which do you choose? As for myself, whilst I love the Charter House with its hallowed memories, I love Heaven more; whilst I love my country, I love the Church of Christ more; whilst I love my King, I love my God more. (Standing and raising his arm.) I refuse the Oath. Those words, I know, mean death. But is God's arm shortened that He will not give me strength to die for Him, as He strengthened the holy martyrs, as He strengthened an Alban, a Thomas-a-Becket? What say you, my brothers? Who will accompany his Prior to the altar of sacrifice?

Humphrey. (Falling on knees.) My Father in Christ, like the Angels at Bethlehem, you have announced to us this day tidings of great joy. I am an old man; I have been daily expecting the summons of death. But, oh, is

God not good to allow me to die as a martyr for the faith?

Prior. Humphrey, we have been united for many years in life, we shall not be separated in death—and oh, such a death!

(Prior assists Father Humphrey to his chair and returns to desk.)

Prior. (Standing. To the others.) And you, my sons?

The Rest. (Falling on knees. All together exclaim, with uplifted arm.) I will rather die than swear this sacrilegious Oath.

Prior. (To youngest monk.) You too, Sebastian, youngest of my flock?

Sebastian. Oh, Father, do you doubt me?

Prior. No, my son. Thanks be to God! Rise, brethren. (All rise.) God hath foretold to me this hour of supreme trial. Many a night I prayed to the Blessed Trinity to gird us all with fortitude for the sacrifice, for the crucifixion. But I never doubted, I knew that none of my loved ones would flinch before the cross of Christ. Still, my sons, we must not trust in our human weakness—a cruel death awaits us. At any moment the royal officers may invade these sacred precincts and drag us off to prison—the sacrificers are impatient for the victims. Let us spend the short time remaining to us in fervent prayer that God may prepare us for the great trial by clothing us with the courage of the martyrs.

(Prior kneels before statue of our Lady; Father Sebastian lights the candles; all kneel and engage

in silent prayer for a few minutes. Suddenly a flourish of trumpets and shouting of mob are heard in the distance.)

Prior. Oh Mother Mary, sweet patron of our holy house, in thee is our hope; leave us not alone in this our last struggle with flesh and blood, take each one of us by the hand and lead us safely through tribulation and suffering to everlasting joy with thee in heaven.

All answer "Amen."

(The blast of trumpets and shouting approach nearer.)

Prior. (Arising and extending hands over the monks.) Oh Heavenly Father, who didst fortify the holy martyrs in their last combat, impart to us, Thy weak children, Thine own divine strength, that we may walk courageously unto death in the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ.

All answer "Amen."

(The mob is heard entering the monastery.)

Prior. My sons, the great hour is come. Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Remember, the kingdom of heaven.

Earl. (Entering L with Richard.) Enter, men! Here are the traitors.

(Many men-at-arms enter, followed by a shouting rabble, among them Layton. The sight of the monks at prayer causes the soldiers and others to fall back in awe.)

Earl. (To the men-at-arms.) Soldiers, what do you fear? (To the mob.) Shout, you cowards!

Layton. (Turning to mob.) Down with the monks!

Mob. Down with the monks!

Earl. (To the Carthusians.) Arise, and listen to His Majesty's will.

Prior. Arise, brethren. (Monks arise.)

Earl. (Reads.) "It has been enacted by Parliament that all subjects of the realm take an oath under penalty of misprision of treason, to acknowledge and recognize His Majesty, Henry VIII, as the chief and supreme Head of the Church of England, and likewise to renounce all obedience to the Bishop of Rome, as having no more power than any other bishop." (Addressing the monks.) The King has graciously sent you a copy of this Oath under his own signature, and has commissioned me to receive the adjuration from you. Will you swear as ordered by Parliament?

Prior. Henry is our King. If duty ordered, all my brethren here and I would shed our life blood in his defence; but, my lord, there is One higher than Henry, whom all men must obey above all kings, Almighty God—

Richard. No preaching! Will you take the Oath?

Prior. How can we take this Oath when the Catholic Church has always held and taught otherwise?

Earl. I care not for the Church, will you consent or not?

Prior. (With arm raised.) In the name of God, I refuse the Oath.

Earl. And what say the rest of you? Will you—

All. (Together, with uplifted arm.) In the name of God, we refuse the Oath.

Earl. Do you fully realize what this refusal means? Confiscation of all your goods and death. Once more, will you take the Oath?

All. (Including Prior, with uplifted arm.) In the name of God we refuse the Oath.

Richard. Traitors!

Layton. Traitors!

Mob. Traitors! Traitors!

Earl. Rebels, one and all! My duty is clear. The King's orders must be fulfilled. Soldiers, seize this obstinate monk and his fellow-traitors, and lead them to prison. (Soldiers advance.)

Prior. (To soldiers, who halt.) Hold! (Addressing Earl.) Traitors! You know that is a base falsehood. You know we are as loyal subjects of the King as yourself or any other Englishman in the realm.

Earl. How dare you thus address the Earl of Northumberland?

Prior. (To Earl.) This is a day of triumph for iniquity, for your iniquity. The lands of the Church will soon be sequestered, the sanctuary of the Lord will soon be desecrated, the lives of innocent religious will soon be sacrificed—and for what? To satisfy your greedy ambition. But, "Revenge is mine," saith the Lord. Henry of Northumberland, remember—

you will never know a moment of joy in this monastery which you are stealing from God; aye, the day will come when in this very chapter hall, before this statue of our Lady, the dagger of an assassin will pierce your breast, and within twenty-four hours after will follow the violent death of your son and your nephew.

Richard. (Scornfully.) Ha, ha, ha!

Layton. (Turning to mob.) Ha, ha, ha!

Mob. Ha, ha, ha!

Earl. (To Prior.) The executioner will soon put a stop to your evil tongue. (To soldiers.) Men-at-arms, must I tell you your duty? Seize this would-be prophet and his fellow-traitors, and confine them in the dungeons of the Tower. (Whilst the soldiers surround the monks and lead them off L, the Prior intones the words: "We praise Thee, King of martyrs," and the rest of the Carthusians continue the choral. Before the Prior, who leads, has left the hall, the stanza should be finished, so that the curtain may fall with all the monks, soldiers, and rabble still on the stage.)

CHORAL.

We praise Thee, King of martyrs, Thy mercy we proclaim,

Who by Thy blood redeemed us. Blessed be Thy glorious name!

The battle rages round us, we give our life for Thee; Bestow the palm of victory, our life, dear Lord, Thou'lt be.

Richard. To death with the traitors!

Mob. To death with the traitors!

CURTAIN.

Scene II.

Time—A week later.

SCENE—A cell in the Tower.

Prior John. (Seated on a bench, in deep thought.) Wonderful are the ways of God! I remember how I loved when a child to read the story of the holy martyrs, and how my young heart used to glow with enthusiasm to imitate their glorious combat for the Lord. And now in my old age to think that God has chosen me to be as another Stephen—to-day I shall receive the martyr's crown. Is this but a happy dream? (Clutching chains.) No! 'tis not a dream, 'tis true, God be praised! How could I bear to live longer and behold the sanctuaries of religion profaned, and the chosen ones of God driven from their hallowed homes, persecuted unto death! Oh truly, Satan reigns in England now. (Rising.) Spare, O Lord, spare Thy people, and be not angry with them forever. Strike me, O Lord as a victim for my countrymen.

Edmund. (Entering L hastily.) Oh, Father!

Prior. Edmund!

Edmund. (Throwing himself at feet of Prior.) Will you forgive me, will God forgive me?

Prior. (Gently raising Edmund.) Calm yourself, my son.

Edmund. I cannot. Remorse for my guilt

gives me no peace. Ah, but you will forgive me?

Prior. With all my heart.

Edmund. Alas, for love of my father, I have betrayed my soul. I have sworn the accursed Supremacy Oath. (Pauses.) Oh, how you must despise me!

Prior. Despise you, my son? Does God despise the repentant sinner?

Edmund. And God will pardon me?

Prior. Edmund, have you not read in the holy Gospel of Peter the Apostle?

Edmund. Thank God, I need not despair. Father, how can I make reparation to wash away my guilt?

Prior. Your good angel must have guided you to me before my death, for I have long wished for an opportunity to tell you God's will in regard to your future. Listen, my son. The Lord would have you fly at once from the impious world. Oh, that you had flown before the wings of the bird were wounded! Leave your home and your father, and hasten to Rome where dwells the true Vicar of Christ. Beg the Holy Father to guide your future course. Are you ready for the sacrifice?

Edmund. God wills that sacrifice from me?

Prior. God wills it.

Edmund. Then I am ready.

Prior. (Embracing Edmund.) My son, and my pride!

Edmund. And will God give me strength that the flesh may not be weak?

Prior. Edmund, hearken to me. One day you will return to your native land as a priest of God, zealous to labor amid danger and tribulation for the salvation of your fellow-countrymen,—and you will die for Christ, as I die today.

Edmund. God's will be done! Will you pray in heaven for me?

Prior. Would that I were worthy of heaven! Yes, my son, I will pray for you till we are united above.

Edmund. Oh, I know I should not ask you, but will you pray for my unhappy father?

Prior. Edmund, I have begged the Almighty to accept my death as an expiation for the guilt of the Earl of Northumberland. God has been pleased to hear my prayer. He has revealed to me that in return for your sacrifice and my sacrifice, you will, before you die, be the means of saving the soul of your father. You must now leave me, the soldiers will soon be here to conduct me to death, nay, rather to my birth in eternity.

Edmund. (Kneeling.) Many a time since my infancy you have laid your consecrated hands on me; Father, bless me once more for the last time.

Prior. (Lays his hands on head of Edmund and blesses him in silence.) God be with you till we met again—in heaven.

(Noise of troopers. Entrance L. of four of the same, led by Captain Cromwell.)

Captain. What does this mean? (Roughly seizing Edmund.) Young man, this is no—zounds! it is Earl Northumberland's son! Sir Edmund, you kneeling at the feet of this traitor!

Edmund. Traitor! (Draws sword on terrified Captain.)

Prior. Edmund! (Makes sign to Edmund to sheathe sword.)

Edmund. (Embracing Prior.) Farewell, Father.

Prior. Farewell, my son. (Exit L. Edmund.)

Captain. (To Prior, after assuring himself that Edmund has disappeared.) Yes, traitor! (To soldiers.) Men-at-arms, seize the prisoner! (Soldiers seize Prior.) Gaoler, loose the chains! (Gaoler looses chains.) Now to the gallows! The hurdle is waiting.

(Captain leads procession L, followed by soldiers, the Prior, between two guards, last.)

Prior. (As they march out.) In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped, I shall not be confounded forever. Into Thy hands I commend my spirit. Thou hast redeemed me, Lord God of truth.

Gaoler. (Alone.) It's wrong, it's wrong! They have no right to put him to death. That man is a saint. He wouldn't take the "Premcy" Oath? Hang the "Premcy" Oath! King Henry Head of the Church? Pshaw, I wager he wants to grant himself another divorce.

Layton. (Entering L.) Hallo, Robin Ruff, glad to be rid of the traitor?

Gaoler. Hold your tongue! That man was no traitor, he was a saint.

Layton. No more a saint than I am.

Gaoler. You! I know you, Layton Legh. The devil knows you, too.

Layton. You need not get angry. What was Earl Northumberland's son doing here?

Gaoler. I don't know. (Taking out gold and counting.) He is a gentleman. That's more than I can say of you. What business have you here, anyway?

Layton. (Presenting a coin to gaoler.) Here, Robin, I can be a gentleman, too.

Gaoler. (Takes coin and strikes it on the floor.) I thought it might be counterfeit.

Layton. Now tell me, what did Sir Edmund say to the Prior?

Gaoler. How do I know? Layton, are you the same old rascal as ever?

Layton. (Aside.) The fool! I must loosen his tongue with this. (Pulling out bottle.) Robin, have you lost your old taste for good liquor?

Gaoler. (Reaching for bottle.) Try me. (Takes a big draught—Layton snatches bottle.) That's not bad. Where did you steal it? Let me have another swig.

Layton. Not a drop, till you say what happened here when the Prior and Sir Edmund were together.

Gaoler. (Aside, as he walks to front of stage.) It can do no harm to tell—the holy

man may be dead by this time. (Turning to Layton.) Well, if you must know, Sir Edmund threw himself at the feet of the saint and asked his forgiveness.

Layton. Forgiveness for what?

Gaoler. For swearing that blamed "Premcy" Oath. (Pauses and feels his throat.)

Layton. Go on, go on.

Gaoler. I can't speak. My throat is too dry. (Layton hands bottle to gaoler, who gulps down a large quantity. Layton snaps bottle from his lips.) Ah, let me finish the stuff.

Layton. What did the Prior say?

Gaoler. Something about fleeing from England.

Layton. Yes, yes. And what did Sir Edmund answer?

Gaoler. He promised he would leave at once; and I don't blame him, when they are hanging saints in this country.

Layton. What else did they talk about?

Gaoler. Look here, Layton, I am no spy. Give me the bottle.

Layton. (Aside.) I know enough. (Gives bottle to gaoler, who slowly empties it.) (Aside.) This information is worth gold to me. Richard will be in raptures when I tell him.

Gaoler. (Whose voice and carriage to the end of the scene betray slightly the effect of the liquor.) Layton Legh, (Shaking bottle at

Layton) it's the like of you they ought to be hanging.

Layton. Good-bye, Robin. I hope the next time we meet you will have a more civil tongue in your head. (Exit L Layton.)

Gaoler. (Flourishing bottle.) Ha, ha, ha! I will eat my head if he isn't the biggest black-guard in England. I wouldn't trust him in his sleep. (Musing.) I wonder why he was so anxious to find out what happened between the Saint and Sir Edmund. (Pauses, then shows uneasiness.) He can't mean any harm to Earl Northumberland's son? Pshaw, I never thought of that! (In vexation throws bottle to floor.) That plaguy stuff is to blame! (Pauses.) No, no—who could bear a grudge against the finest young gentleman in the country? How kind he was to me when I worked for his father! I remember when my good wife died, he felt as keenly for the children as I myself. He tried his best to keep me at Percy Manor, and I'd be there still, if it wasn't for that bear of a cousin of his, Richard Percy. (Musing.) What can Layton be after? I'm sorry I opened my mouth at all. (Goes to Exit L and shakes fist.) Layton Legh, if you touch a hair of Sir Edmund's head, I will break every bone in your body.

CURTAIN.

ACT III.

Scene I.

Time—Evening of same day.

SCENE—An apartment in Percy Hall, illuminated by candles.

Servant Thomas. (Enters R and dashes a cap on the floor.) Take that, Richard Percy. (Kicks cap.) Take that from me.

Servant Robert. (Entering L.) What are you doing, Tom? Losing your senses?

Thomas. No, Bob, I am just giving vent to my feelings. (Kicking cap again.) One more, for good measure. If there's anyone in this world I'd like to thrash it's Richard Percy; and since I am unable to drub the villain himself, I am trouncing his cap by proxy. Richard Percy is a bundle of meanness. Since he came into this house life has become unbearable.

Robert. A better proxy to trounce than Richard Percy's cap would be his hanger-on, Layton Legh, who is now in the entrance hall waiting to see the Earl. I hate the sight of him.

Thomas. So do I, Isn't he the scamp that robbed us at Cranmer's Tavern last Monday night, when we were both three sheets in the wind?

Robert. Audley, the bartender, swears it was Legh.

Thomas. I've a mind to go down and kick the rascal out of the house. Has his lordship arrived home?

Robert. Not yet. Suppose we invite Legh upstairs to meet the Earl, and pommel the life out of him?

Thomas. And then invite him downstairs this way. (Shows by gesture the act of ejecting.) A capital idea.

Robert. We'll darken the room, and—

Thomas. You better play his lordship, while I, (Rubbing his hands in gleeful anticipation.) I will attend to my part, oh yes, oh yes. (Robert sets chair opposite exit L, while Thomas leaves R and returns with the Earl's cloak which he puts on Robert, saying:) This will help to trap the beast. I shall bring him here at once. (Exit L Thomas. Robert extinguishes candles, and seats himself in chair; pale moon shines through window. Knock at door.)

Robert. Come in!

(Layton enters L timidly; Thomas, holding a stick, follows a moment later, unobserved by Layton. Robert yawns loudly; Layton draws back startled.)

Layton. My lord, my lord, where are you?

Robert. (Imitates the Earl's voice throughout the dialogue.) Fellow, what is your name?

Layton. Layton Legh.

Robert. Layton Legh, Layton Legh! I know a scoundrel who bears that name. (Thomas points at Layton with stick.)

Layton. Your lordship must know me: I am the man to whom you pledged a reward for assisting to check an uprising in favor of the Carthusians.

Robert. Indeed! And how much of a reward do you wish?

Layton. I would be satisfied with one hundred pounds.

Robert. Ahem, ahem. (Aside.) He will have to be satisfied with one pounding. (Pantomime by Thomas of beating.)

Layton. (Looking about suspiciously.) My lord, had you not better strike a light? (Thomas makes a sign to Robert to begin the attack.)

Robert. No, I am going to strike something else. (Rising.) Thomas, are you ready?

Thomas. Ready, my lord. (Layton turns in surprise to Thomas. Robert and then Thomas seize Layton; after a desperate struggle they throw him to the ground; he calls for help.)

Thomas. Hold his hands, Bob. (After Robert has secured Layton's hands, Thomas forces a handkerchief into his mouth.) Now Bob, for our money's worth. (Thomas belabors Layton with the stick; Robert retains his hold on Layton's hands, and at the same time administers some cuffs and kicks.)

Thomas. (Resting point of stick on Layton's body.) Bob, open that door. (Robert opens door L. They both take hold of Layton and carry him to the threshold.)

Robert. One, two, three! (They throw Layton down the stairs.)

Thomas. Good-bye, Layton!

Robert. Safe journey!

Thomas. Ah, I feel better now.

Robert. Our money is avenged.

William. (Entering R.) What noisy racket is this? Who extinguished the lights in this room?

Robert. (Re-lighting the candles.) No harm done, William.

Thomas. Leyton Legh has just been borne from the field of battle.

William. Layton Legh! Field of battle! What do you mean? (Robert and Thomas show by pantomime how they had beaten Layton, and, after pointing towards stair-case, how they had ejected him.)

William. (Smiling.) Well, well. I can't say that I am very sorry. The blackguard has been telling such mean lies about the Carthusians, who were his best benefactors. However, you may be sowing seeds of trouble for yourselves: Layton Legh is just now a close satellite of Richard Percy.

Robert. Let the worst come to the worst—we have treated one rogue to his deserts.

William. (Looking out of window.) You better be off now. His lordship is at the gate, and will be here presently. (Sets room in order.)

Thomas. I have only one regret, William: that we cannot give the same battle-field treatment to Richard Percy.

Robert. His day will come yet. (Exeunt R Robert and Thomas.)

William. (In soliloquy.) That accursed Supremacy Oath! What I feared has come to pass. Sir Edmund's love for his father has brought about his fall. But ere long God will open his eyes to see his sin. (Listening.) I hear the Earl's step. What a shame for a father to be leading his son astray! (Picks up Richard's cap and makes his exit at R.)

Earl. (Enters L and walks to and fro.) At last Fortune's smile shines full upon me. The world is mine! No longer will lack of means hamper my projects for the glory of my house. Still in favor with the King. I'm no Sir Thomas More—poor fellow! Give Henry his own way in everything, and flatter him, flatter even his meanness, and you will be his favorite forever. I must not forget to tell His Majesty of my son's loyalty in bearing the royal document to the Carthusians and taking the Oath himself. Edmund must now come out of his shell and display his talents before the world. I prophesy, that quiet boy will achieve a great name for himself at court and in Parliament. My intimacy with the King will advance him. I would like to see Edmund Prime Minister, and he will be, he will be before many years. How proud I shall be! What a comfort for me in my declining years! (Knock at the door.) Enter! (Layton enters L.) Sirrah! What right have you to invade my private chamber? The place for you to meet me is the entrance hall.

Layton. My lord, I have a very important secret to tell you, and as there were others waiting in the hall, I was afraid I might be overheard.

Earl. You should have sent a message, and waited till I summoned you. What is your important secret? I have no time to waste.

Layton. I wish to lodge a complaint against two of your servants who have—

Earl. A complaint against my servants! I do declare! Is that your important secret?

Layton. No, my lord, but they outraged me so—

Earl. State the business that brought you here. My patience is well nigh exhausted.

Layton. Noble sir, I have something, indeed, of vital importance to tell, but (stammering) to state the truth, I would like a present of money for my information. I am a poor man—

Earl. What! you want money! Leave my presence this instant. What do I care for your information?

Layton. (Moving slowly towards the door L.) Very well. But if Sir Edmund loses his life—

Earl. My son lose his life! What do you mean?

Layton. Give me a sum of gold.

Earl. I have a mind to send for the officers and have you put into jail.

Layton. Then my secret will remain hidden, and Sir Edmund—

Earl. The impudence of the fellow! How much do you desire?

Layton. Two hundred pounds.

Earl. Are you crazy? Two hundred pounds! Never!

Layton. My information is worth more than that to you. (Pretends to be leaving.)

Earl. (Aside.) It is easy to promise. (To Layton.) Hold! I promise you the two hundred pounds.

Layton. I must have that in writing; I wish to make sure.

Earl. If this isn't exasperating! (Goes to table, takes from drawer paper, ink, and quill, and writes.) What's your name?

Layton. Layton Legh.

Earl. Layton Legh! I have heard of you before. (Continues writing, then hands paper to Layton.) There, does that satisfy you?

Layton. (Reads.) "I promise to pay Layton Legh two hundred pounds for certain information communicated by him to me. Signed, Northumberland." Yes, it is quite correct, my lord. That sum is in addition to what you owe me for my services against the Carthusians.

Earl. Now for your information.

Layton. Your son, Sir Edmund, promised Prior John that he would retract his oath and signature to the Supremacy Act.

Earl. (Shows surprise at first, then laughs heartily.) Ha, ha, ha! Continue.

Layton. Moreover, he has resolved to flee from England at once.

Earl. Ha, ha, ha! Lie number two. Go on.

Layton. It is no lie, my lord. It is the truth.

Earl. Go on, I say.

Layton. One very near to you is plotting the death of your son, and will soon have him arrested by the Sheriff on the charge of high treason.

Earl. Lie number three. Keep on.

Layton. That's all, my lord. I assure you if you fail to take immediate action, you will see my words come true.

Earl. Is this your important secret?

Layton. Yes, your lordship, and now I ask you to keep your part of the contract and give me my money.

Earl. Oh, you would have the money? (Pauses.) Come here to-morrow morning, and you will get what you deserve.

Layton. I would like to have it now.

Earl. Enough insolence from you to-day. Come here to-morrow. Now leave.

Layton. Could you not give me half?

Earl. Do you see that door? Go! (Exit L Layton, muttering to himself.) The brazenness of the villain, trying to swindle me in my own house! (Pauses and betrays uneasiness for a moment.) No, no! It cannot be true.

Ridiculous! I must rehearse the comedy at the court; they will hardly believe me. Ha, ha, ha! I told him to come to-morrow and get what he deserves. He will get it. (Knock at the door.) Come in! (Edmund enters L.)

Earl. Welcome, my son. I have not seen you all day.

Edmund. Thank you, father. Has Layton Legh been with you?

Earl. Yes. Why do you ask?

Edmund. I just now passed him in the hall. He seemed beside himself with anger. I do not know what he meant, but I surely heard him say: "If the Earl doesn't give me the money he promised, I'll murder him."

Earl. Ha, ha, ha! He will be safe in jail to-morrow. He came here with a cock and bull story about your retracting the Supremacy Oath and hastening away from England. (Edmund startled.) He was trying to work a fraud game on me, but I was not caught.

Edmund. Father, he told you the truth. I have taken back my oath and I wish to depart from home.

Earl. Ha, ha, ha! A good joke! My own boy at the swindle game! Do you want two hundred pounds also? (Richard observes the following scene from window in rear of stage.)

Edmund. (Aside.) My God, help me! (Falls on knees before Earl.) Father, before my God, I declare to you that I was never more earnest in my life. There is the sacri-

legious Act; (Handing paper to Earl.) I have erased my name from it; I have abjured the Supremacy Oath. God calls me to the holy priesthood. For my soul's sake I must leave England. We can arrange together—

Earl. (Throws the paper to the floor in a frenzy.) What do you say? (Draws sword and makes a pass at Edmund who eludes the thrust.—Edmund rises and escapes L from apartment, his father making several futile lunges at him. Earl rings bell excitedly—paces up and down in mingled rage and dismay—servants William and Robert enter R.)

Earl. William, Robert, pursue my son. Hasten, bring him back to me. (Servants leave L.) Come back! Let him go his way. He is no longer son of mine. (Servants return.) Why stand you there? Bring me my son, I say! (Servants slink away L in fright.) My son! No, he is not my son! Yes, he is my son! (Pauses and grows more calm.) My God! What have I done! Would I strike down my dear boy, my Edmund! (Sees paper on floor.) That miserable Oath! (Picks up paper and scans it.) The King will have his life. Oh, oh, oh! (Sinks into chair beside table.)

Richard. (Entering R. Aside.) Aha! Treason! My star is now in the ascendant. (Takes hold of Earl's arm.) Uncle, can I help you?

Earl. Leave me alone, leave em alone with my grief.

Richard. Has anything happened to my cousin?

Earl. Your cousin has been driven from his home by his own father.

Richard. (Aside.) I must inform the Sheriff and pursue him at once. (Exit L Richard.)

Earl. (After a few moments of thought.) After all, Edmund is right. (Striking table with fist.) Curse the Oath! Curse the King! I'll shield my son. (Pauses, then rises suddenly.) I must see him. (Rings bell.) I must tell him my sorrow. He will forgive me—I know my boy—Edmund will forgive his wretched father. (Enter William L.) William, call Richard to me.

William. Richard has just left the house.

Earl. So soon? I must have someone to help me find Edmund. Bring me my cloak and hat at once, and prepare yourself to come with me.

William. It is late, and you need rest, my lord.

Earl. William, there will be no rest for me till I see my son. Go quickly and get ready, you will find me in the entrance hall. (Exit L Earl.)

William. I knew sorrow would befall my master. The curse of God visits those who touch the Lord's anointed. I was sure Sir Edmund would repent and retract. 'Twas but a moment's weakness, too much love for his father. Thank God, the noble youth is his own true self again. I feel there will be no more weakness, no more faltering. Whatever happens to him henceforth, his fate will be my

fate. If Sir Edmund has to suffer, I will suffer with him; if Sir Edmund has to die, I will die with him. (Exit R William.)

CURTAIN.

Scene II.

Time—Early the following morning.

SCENE—A wharf on the seaboard. As curtain rises, four sailors are discovered sitting on boxes or barrels.

First Old Sailor. Wall, as I was remarkin', we was just opposite the Canary Isles when up kem a hurrican' from the west, jiminy wheezers, what a hurrican'! The wind she blew, and she blew, and she blew. Our schooner pitched and rolled like as though she was a landlubber boozed with liquor. We was all on deck haulin' in the sails, when quick as lightnin' a mighty gust of wind kem along and lifted every man Jack of us off'n our feet, and, jumpin' whillikins, up in the air we went. Cap'n Drake kem running to the deck—his red whiskers was flappin' to and fro like a bandanna on a clothes-line. When he could get his breath he shouted: "Stick to your ship, men. Where are you going?" "Up to heaven," says one of the crew. Cap'n Drake was so flabbergasted, he couldn't even cuss, and I never knowed a man that cud cuss as powerfully as the old Cap'n. When we was sixty or a hundred feet high—wasn't that it, Hal?

S. O. S. Sixty or a hundred feet exactly.

F. O. S. Well, when we was sixty or a hundred feet high, the wind all at once died out, and down we kem, and we didn't stop comin' till we flopped right back on deck.

(The two young sailors break into a laugh—the two old sailors grow very indignant.)

F. Y. S. Uncle Bill, you don't expect us to swallow that yarn?

F. O. S. (Rising. To S. O. S.) Come away! (To young sailors) Humph! Hal and me was bunkin' in a fo'castle afare you smart Alecks was out of your swaddlin' clothes. (The two old sailors go towards Exit L.)

F. Y. S. (Hastening after them.) Come, Uncle Bill, don't get huffed; we didn't mean to rile you. (Pulling out bottle.) Try some of this rum; I just brought it home from Portugal.

F. O. S. Do you take back what you said about swallying dem fac's?

F. Y. S. Yes, I take it back.

S. Y. S. I, too.

(F. O. S. takes bottle. The four seat themselves as before. F. O. S. drinks.)

F. O. S. (Makes a vain attempt to sing.) "Fling out the white sails! Haste! the lure of the sea bewitches"—Here, Hal (handing bottle to S. O. S.) you try. The ocean fogs has spiled my voice.

S. O. S. (After imbibing, sings with poor success.) "Fling out the white said! Haste! The lure of the sea bewitches"—

F. O. S. Shut up, Hal. One of you young lads sing. (F. Y. S. nods to S. Y. S., who

sings—the quartette repeat the last two lines as a refrain.)

SONG.

Fling out the white sails! Haste! The lure of the sea
Bewitches our souls, O my mariners brave!
Our bark like a captive bird yearns to be free,
And wing its swift flight o'er the turbulent wave.
Away from the land to the surge-cresting foam!
God's ocean alone is the sailor's true home.

The storm-king exults, as he frees the fierce gale,
Hurls high the huge billows: "My prey shall ye
be!"
Dark danger is nigh, yet our hearts never quail,
The Lord watches o'er his staunch sons of the sea.
Away from the land to the surge-cresting foam!
God's ocean alone is the sailor's true home.

F. O. S. (Looking towards L.) Who's dem
coming?

(Richard and Captain Cromwell enter L in hot
haste.)

Richard. This is very annoying. Where
could he have escaped? I was sure we would
find him here, waiting for a vessel to carry
him off to France. I can't explain the mys-
tery.

Captain. It's a mystery to me, too, unless
he has sought death in these waters.

Richard. No, no, not he. (Gazing towards
R.) I wonder could he possibly have got
away on the ship that I descry in the distance?

Captain. It can't be very long since the ves-
sel left the wharf.

Richard. (Looking towards L.) Goodness!
Here comes the Earl. I'm glad we sent the

men back to the barracks. Captain, not a word, mind, to him or any one else about my connection with you and the soldiers. I will reward you richly for your silence. (Earl rushes in L, followed by his servant William.)

Earl. You here, Richard! Where is Edmund?

Richard. I am sorry, uncle, I cannot tell you. I traced his steps to this wharf—

Earl. So did we. And he is not here! Where can he be?

Richard. He seems to have vanished. What a pity! I thought I would make you happy by bringing him home to you this morning.

Earl. I must find my boy, if I have to search all England. Tell me, Richard, what shall I do?

Richard. Really, uncle, I do not know what to suggest. I just now had an idea—perhaps these sailors can throw some light on the mystery. (Addressing sailors.) I say, men, did any of you notice a strange youth about the dock this morning?

F. O. S. (Stepping forward and saluting.) A tall handsome-looking youngster with light hair?

S. O. S. Dressed in black.

Earl. That is he, my son.

F. O. S. Yes, sir, a lad of them descriptions kem to this dock a short while ago. We didn't ha' a chance to speak to him, but we could see

he was a good bit flustered. I aint certain whether he is the one you mean.

Earl. Yes, yes. Where did he go?

F. O. S. (Pointing towards R.) Can you sight a vessel away out there?

Earl. (Looking towards R.) Yes, I can make it out quite clearly.

F. O. S. I seen him board that brig.

Richard. For what place is she bound?

F. O. S. For Calais, sir, France.

Earl. My God! (Totters, William supports him. Exit L Captain.)

Richard. Is there no way of reaching the ship? This is the young man's father, the Earl of Northumberland.

F. O. S. I am very sorry, but if he was the King's son you couldn't ketch that brig now.

Richard. Too bad, too bad. But cheer up, uncle, Edmund loves you too much to remain away long. (Earl shakes his head despondingly. Exeunt sailors L.)

William. My lord, had we not now better return home?

Earl. I have a home no longer. The joy of my house has departed on that ship. (Looks after ship. Exit L Richard. Earl musing.) He may return, he loves me. No, he loves me no more. How he must despise me! Oh, if I could only tell him my sorrow for that hateful deed! (Enter L Richard in haste, accompanied by a messenger.)

Richard. (Eagerly.) Uncle, a message.

Earl. A message! From whom?

Messenger. (Handing note to Earl.) Sir Edmund gave me this note before the ship departed, and requested me to deliver it into your hands. I was hastening to Percy Manor, when someone told me I should find you here.

Earl. (Giving coin to messenger.) You do not know how grateful I am to you. (Exit L messenger.)

William. (While Earl is opening the note.) My lord, Richard and I will retire. I shall await you at the entrance of the wharf.

Earl. Faithful William. And Edmund loved you too.

William. Not more than I loved Sir Edmund. I would give my life for his sake. (Exit William L, followed reluctantly by Richard.)

Earl. (Reads.) "My beloved father," ah, he loves me still. "I sail from England this morning. My heart is breaking at the thought of leaving you, but God calls, and I must obey." He loves God better than me. "I have asked the Lord to accept my life in return for the eternal salvation of my dear father." To die for me, think of it, after my base outrage upon him! "My father, the path you are now treading will lead you to eternal misery. To win the fickle favor of a mortal king, you have sacrificed the friendship of the immortal King of kings. To satisfy an unholy ambition, you

have imbrued your hands in the blood of the very saints of God." How his words smite my conscience! "For the sake of fleeting earthly gain, you have forsaken the true faith, the faith which my dead mother and you nurtured in my heart when I was a child." Alas, too true, Edmund, too true! "O, I beseech you, stifle not your warning conscience, turn away from the road of destruction, return to the faith of our noble ancestors, the saving faith of Christ! Life is short, eternity is forever. Farewell, dearest father, till we meet, I trust, in heaven. Your Edmund."

Earl. (After rubbing tears from his eyes, turns towards the receding ship.) Noble youth! You would die for me. Your innocent life for my guilty soul. Oh, I am a father unworthy of such a son. "Turn from the path of destruction." Yes, you say truly destruction. Oh, that this craven heart had your courage, Edmund. "Farewell, till we meet, I trust, in heaven." Till we meet in heaven! Heaven for you, no heaven for me! However, for your sake, Edmund, God may forgive me. (Waving his hand to ship.) Farewell, my boy, farewell.

CURTAIN.

ACT IV.

Scene I.

Time—1545, ten years after. Late morning. Edmund, now a priest, has returned to England by commission of the Pope. He visits his father's home in London.

SCENE—Former Chapter Hall of the Charter House, which latter is at present the city residence of the Earl of Northumberland. No alterations have been made in the room, save that, instead of the monastic pictures, benches, etc., drawing-room furniture has been installed. The statue of the Blessed Virgin still remains in its old place, but is unadorned. A low sofa rests in the rear of the apartment.

(Edmund, robed in a cassock, and William, much aged, enter R.)

Edmund. Ah, William, I know the hallowed spot well—the old chapter hall. And our Lady's statue! William, dear, may I not meditate here alone for a while?

William. Certainly, Sir Edmund.

Edmund. I pray you, do not call me Sir Edmund. I am no longer a nobleman, only an humble priest. (Richard casts a hasty glance at them through window in rear, and then disappears unseen.)

William. Yes, Sir—father. His lordship, and Richard, I think, are absent. I shall watch at the lodge for them. When I see either approach, I shall hasten to inform you, so that you may have time to conceal yourself. (Exit L William.)

Edmund. What sweet and bitter recollections this place brings to my mind! I seem to

see before me the saintly Prior John and his holy monks, sons he was wont to call them. Worthy sons of a noble father! Would to God that I may be steadfast unto death as they. Happy days of my childhood when I used to roam with joyous heart through this sacred cloister. God is good that he hides from us the future. O sacrilege! My own father the despoiler of God's sanctuary, the slayer of God's saints. But thank God, his old love for the Blessed Virgin still endures, he has spared my favorite statue. How I loved to kneel at the feet of our Lady and ask her in my childish way to bless my dear father and mother. (Kneels before statue in silent prayer, resting head on base of statue.)

Richard. (Enters cautiously R and looks sharply at Edmund. Aside.) Yes, it is he. It is Edmund. This time I shall make sure of his capture. (Exit L.)

Edmund. (Raising his head.) O Mother of God and Mother mine, thou art the consoler of the afflicted, listen to me, thy afflicted child. Save the soul of my poor father. Grievously he has sinned, but O, art not thou the refuge of sinners? God is justly angry with him, I know, but one prayer from thee will appease the divine wrath. Speak that prayer, I beseech thee. Offer to God my life as an atonement for the sins of my father, my blood for his soul. O dear Mother, thou wilt not, thou canst not refuse—save my father.

William. (Enters L in haste.) His lordship is returning. Richard, too, is home. Haste, Sir Ed—father, to the hiding chamber.

(*Exeunt R Edmund and William.* After a short interval Earl, looking quite old and haggard, enters L.)

Earl. (In soliloquy.) No peace for my soul. Time will not blot out the past. Like hideous spectres the wrongs I have done are ever haunting me. A curse upon my ambition! What has the vile thing brought me? Honors? They weary and disgust me. Pleasures? I have no heart to enjoy them. Riches? The malediction of God rests on them. Oh, the burden of guilt that oppresses my conscience! And to die and face my God! Death! I seem to-day to feel the touch of its cold hand. Ah, if Edmund were here. He could save my soul from perdition—he alone. Edmund, Edmund, come and save me. (Pauses.) If I could only pray. But I am afraid of God—God hates me. (Looks towards statue of Blessed Virgin.) Wilt thou listen to me? I have always loved thee. I have no fear of thee, thou art the mother of all, even of wicked sinners like myself. (Kneels before statue and prays.) I am not worthy, Mother of God, to ask thee for a favor. But I must see my son before I die. My good angel tells me, Edmund will stand between me and my God. Thou art a mother, O, I ask thee to give me back my son. I wish to amend my life, I wish to make reparation for the past. Edmund will be my guide to eternity, my support in death. Blessed Lady, do

not refuse me—Edmund is my only hope—bring him back to me. Hear me, hear me!

Layton. (Enters L hastily, holding paper in hand.) Give me my money!

Earl. (Rising up.) Who bade you enter and disturb me?

Layton. You promised me money, if I should help to prevent an outbreak of the people in favor of the Charter House monks. Besides, here is a paper signed by you promising me two hundred pounds for revealing certain very important information. Many a time in the past ten years I have sought to get what was due to me, but you have always refused even to see me. I will be put off no longer, I demand my money.

Earl. Clear out of here, you scoundrel. If you even enter this house again I will have you arrested.

Layton. I will not stir a step, till I get what you owe me.

Earl. Did you hear me? Clear out!

Layton. (Folds his arms across breast. Defiantly.) Give me my money.

Earl rushes at Layton and tries to eject him. Layton throws off Earl.)

Layton. Give me my money, I say.

Earl. (Calls.) William! Robert! Call the police! (Earl again advances towards Layton. The latter takes from his breast a dagger. Earl draws back in astonishment.)

Layton. (With uplifted dagger.) Give me my money, or I'll have your life.

Earl. What! (Attempts to draw sword. Whilst he fumbles with scabbard, Layton rushes upon him and plunges dagger into his breast.)

Layton. (Withdrawing dagger.) There!

Earl. (As he falls.) Help, help! (Sinks unconscious to the ground.)

Layton. (Hurriedly searches Earl's coat, and takes out a purse which he puts into his pocket.) I'll have something.

(Robert and Thomas enter L in haste. Layton advances towards them with raised dagger.)

Layton. Let me pass! (They both rush at Layton. The latter makes a lunge at Robert who dodges the blow. Thomas raises Layton's arm, and the dagger flies in the air. They seize Layton and bear him to the floor. Robert pulls some cord from his pocket and quickly binds Layton's hands in front of his body.)

Thomas. Tie his arms securely, Bob.

William. (Enters R and manifests horror at the sight of Earl's body. He then calls.) Robert, come hither a moment. (Robert hurries over to William, while Thomas stands guard over Layton. William speaks to Robert.) Help me place his lordship on the sofa. (The two carry Earl's body to sofa. William then hastens away R to call Edmund. Robert joins Thomas.)

Thomas. Come, Bob, we'll drag the hound

to the library, and send for the police. (They take hold of Layton's feet and haul him L out of the room. After they have left, William followed by Edmund enters hurriedly R. William points to sofa. Edmund draws back as he beholds body of Earl.)

Edmund. My poor father! God have mercy on his soul! (They hasten to Earl's side, and bend anxiously over him.)

William. He breathes, he lives. (Cries into ear of Earl.) My lord, my lord! (To Edmund.) He hears not, he is unconscious.

Edmund. (Kneels just behind Earl and calls.) Father, father!

Earl. (Stirs feebly.) My son is calling. Mother of God, pray for me, Jesus, have pity on me. (Sees William.) William, I am dying, get a priest.

Edmund. I am a priest. (Makes a sign to William to withdraw. Exit R William.)

Earl. The voice of my Edmund. You are a priest?

Edmund. Yes, fa—yes.

Earl. Thank God, a priest. Oh Father, I have been a great sinner, absolve me before I die, forgive me my sins, my sins, my many sins. I am sorry, my God, I am sorry. I will right the past. Oh, my guilt! Jesu, mercy!

Edmund. (Makes sign of cross over Earl.) God has forgiven you.

Earl. Forgiven? God be praised! Edmund has saved my soul.

Edmund. No, father, our Lady has saved you.

Earl. Yes, our dear Lady. Is that you, Edmund? No, you are a priest. I thought you were my son. (Growing weaker.) Edmund, Edmund, come to me before I die.

Ermund. (Rising and bending over face of Earl.) Edmund does forgive you. Father, I am Edmund.

Earl. (Raises himself with an effort, looks earnestly for a moment at Edmund, and then throws his arms about the latter's neck.) Edmund! My son, my angel. (Dying.) God—bless—fare—well—heaven!

Edmund. Father! (Looks intently at Earl.) He is dead. (Replaces Earl on sofa. Kneels and looks up to heaven.) God of mercy, Thou hast heard my prayer. Now do with me what Thou wilt.

Richard. (Enters L. Draws back startled.) The Earl—blood—dead?

Edmund. (Rising.) Yes, my fa—the Earl has been murdered. (William looks in R, and then retires quickly.)

Richard. Murdered! I am now the Earl of Northumberland. Murdered! And in the old chapter hall of the Carthusians! The Prior's prophecy!

Edmund. (Approaching Richard.) Richard, you know who I am. I beg you to make your peace with God before it is too late. The mercy of the Lord is infinite.

Richard. (Shows hesitation, as though Edmund's words had made a good impression. He then abruptly turns away from Edmund. Aside.) And I have betrayed him to death.

(William and Robert enter R bearing a stretcher, and place Earl's body on the same. Edmund gazes sadly on the face of his father.)

Richard. (Notices dagger on floor.) The dagger of an assassin! Before the statue! Just as Prior John prophesied. Will the rest of his prophecy come true? "Within twenty-four hours"—oh, it's nonsense, I must forget it.

(William and Robert proceed to carry the corpse towards R, followed by Edmund, when suddenly at L enter Captain Cromwell and six soldiers.)

Captain. (To Richard.) Richard, where is the traitor-priest you summoned us to capture? (Richard in a half-daze pays no attention to him.) Ah, that must be he! (Pointing towards Edmund.) I arrest—What! (Hastens across room and looks at dead body on stretcher.) The Earl of Northumberland! I see blood—(Sees dagger on floor) and a dagger—he has been stabbed! (Exeunt William and Robert with corpse at R. Captain addresses Richard.) Has there been foul play. (Richard makes no reply.) Richard Percy, speak, what does all this mean? Has the Earl been murdered?

Richard. Captain Cromwell, address me for the future as Your Lordship. (William enters R, picks up dagger, and puts the same into his pocket.)

Edmund. (To Captain.) Yes, sir, the Earl

of Northumberland has been foully murdered.

Captain. (To Edmund.) By whom? Ah, you are the murderer! I see blood on your clothes.

(Edmund advances excitedly towards Captain, but in a moment calms himself.)

William. (To Captain.) How dare you charge the death of the Earl to his—to—to this innocent priest? (Enter L. Robert and Thomas, holding between them the trembling Layton, his hands still bound.) There (Pointing to Layton.) there is the murderer of my late master. (Addressing Layton.) Layton Legh, did you not plunge this dagger (showing dagger.) into the breast of his lordship?

Layton. (Falls on knees.) O mercy, I was not to blame—the Earl refused to give me my money. Mercy, Captain, I did not mean to kill him. Spare me. Do not put me to death. Mercy, mercy!

Edmund. Yes, show mercy to the poor wretch.

Captain. Bedyll and Rice, seize the villain and confine him in the Tower to await trial for murder. (Two soldiers advance towards Layton.)

Layton. (Appealing to Richard.) Richard, save me. I was always your friend, help me.

Richard. (Turning from Layton.) Take him away!

(The two soldiers seize Layton, lift him to his feet, and are obliged to haul him away.)

Layton. (As he is carried off L.) Mercy,

don't kill me, spare me, mercy, mercy!
(*Exeunt L. Robert and Thomas.*)

(In the meantime William has been urging Edmund to make his escape. Edmund seems loth to flee, but William half-draws him towards R. The Captain, however, perceives their intention.)

Captain. (To Edmund.) Another step, and I'll run this sword through your body. Trying to escape, are you? (Edmund and William halt.)

Richard. (Aside.) His blood will be on my head. (To Captain.) Captain, let him depart, he is innocent.

Captain. (After drawing close to Edmund and gazing steadily at him.) This is the Earl's son, or my name is not Cromwell. (To Richard.) Richard—excuse me—my lord, what do you mean? Innocent? (Addressing Edmund.) Are you not Sir Edmund Percy, the traitor?

Edmund. Believe me, sir, I am no traitor. Never has hand of mine been raised against the King's Majesty or my country. I have consecrated my life to winning the souls of my fellow-countrymen for God and heaven. (Uplifting his arm.) I call the Lord to witness—

Captain. (Interrupting.) A waste of breath. Are you Sir Edmund Percy, the traitor-priest?

Edmund. I am Edmund Percy, priest of God, but no traitor.

Captain. Men-at-arms, seize the rebel and conduct him to the Tower. (Soldiers surround Edmund.)

William. (Advancing before Captain.) I, too, am guilty of treason.

Captain. You guilty of treason?

William. Yes, sir. I would sooner be hanged and quartered than swear that abominable Supremacy Oath. Arrest me as well as my master. I hold, contrary to your impious law, that the Pope, and not any King of England, is the Head of the Church. If Father Edmund is worthy of death, so am I.

Captain. Another traitor! (To William.) You are so anxious to die with your Father Edmund, never fear, you shall have your wish. Soldiers, seize both prisoners and follow me. (Soldiers seize Edmund and William.)

William. (To Edmund.) Father, we shall go to heaven together.

Edmund. (To William.) Faithful unto death! God bless you!

(Exeunt L Captain, William and Edmund, the two latter between guards.)

Richard. (Looking towards L.) Innocent blood, innocent blood! What evil spirit possessed me to denounce Edmund to the authorities? How could an outlawed priest injure my prospects? (Turns and advances towards R.) However, it is too late now; what is done cannot be undone. At last, at last I am the master of Northumberland. (Stops at R, then draws back.) No, I don't want to see that body again. "The day will come when in this very chapter hall, before the statue of our Lady, the dagger of an assassin will pierce

your breast, and within twenty-four hours after will follow the death of your son and your nephew." It makes me shudder. (Pauses.) Make my peace with God before it is too late? (Pauses.) It is too late. Ah, fiddlesticks, stop playing the fool. Rejoice, rejoice, now that the summit of your ambition is attained. "Within twenty-four hours"—there it is again. I shall soon lose my mind. Away disturbing phantom! Let me enjoy my new honors for which I have so long waited. (Whilst Richard is proceeding rapidly towards Exit L, curtain falls.)

Scene II.

Time—Early morning of next day.

SCENE—A woods in the suburbs of London.
On the right side should be placed a little mound, and in the rear centre some shrubbery.

Edmund, wearing a mantle, and William enter L, having escaped from prison through the aid of Robin Ruff.)

Edmund. I presume we are safe here. We can rest a little before we go further.

William. Father, we must escape on some vessel as quickly as possible. We are safe nowhere, as long as we abide in England. If we had only found time to don a disguise.

Edmund. We are in God's hands, William.

William. Who would have thought that this morning we should be hiding in the woods of Sheen, instead of being dragged to execution at Tyburn?

Edmund. You are right, it is wonderful. I never realized the affection old Robin Ruff cherished for me.

William. The poor have a long memory and a grateful heart. You were a true friend to him in the old days.

Edmund. Perhaps we should have remained in the Tower. The poor fellow may get into serious trouble for helping us to escape.

William. I do not think so. There are a number of keepers employed in the Tower; the Sheriff will not be able to place the blame.

Edmund. I hope so. (Faint cries are heard in the distance. Edmund and William are startled.) They are overtaking us. (Cries grow louder: "Within twenty-four hours." I must die, I must die!)

William. No, there seems to be only one voice. Is not the sound familiar to you?

Edmund. Can it be Richard pursuing me?

William. Let us hide behind this shrubbery. He will see us if we remain here. (They both conceal themselves.)

Richard. (Rushing in L wildly.) The blood of Edmund is on me. Behold, they are now leading him out to death—he kneels—he prays. Edmund prays for me? No, he cannot pray for his murderer. Now he stands beneath the gallows—see, he hangs—they torture him—his lips move in prayer—ah, he dies. His innocent blood is on my head. "Within twenty-four hours." My God, I cannot escape. (Draws

dagger.) Die wretch, the devil is waiting for your soul. (Stabs himself and falls on mound. Edmund and William hasten towards him.)

Edmund. Mother of God! What a death! (Withdraws dagger from Richard's breast.) He lives!

William. Father, let us hasten away. The Sheriff's men will soon be upon us.

Edmund. I cannot let my poor cousin die in that state; I must try to save his soul. (Kneels beside Richard.)

William. (Seizing Edmund's arm.) Father Edmund, come. You need not risk your life for this persecutor and murderer.

Edmund. No, William, I will take Christ's revenge. "Do good to them that hate you."

William. (Aside.) A saint! (Addressing Edmund.) Be quick then, Father. I will keep a lookout for the soldiers. (Exit William L.)

Edmund. (Calling to Richard.) Richard, Richard!

Richard. (Stirring a little.) His spirit pursues me.

Edmund. Richard, repent, God will forgive you.

Richard. He mocks me—forgive, forgive me?

Edmund. Remember the good thief on the cross. Repent and God will pardon all. I am a priest.

Richard. I have murdered a priest! His

blood is on my soul.

William. (Entering L in haste.) Sir Edmund, Father, I see Captain Cromwell and his men coming. Hasten, flee, they will capture you.

Edmund. (Rises as if to flee, then looking towards heaven.) No, my Jesus! Thou didst not refuse to die for me. (Kneels again beside Richard.)

William. (Aside.) How like our Lord! I will hasten ahead and try to hold them by surrendering myself. (Exit L William.)

Edmund. (Leaning over Richard.) Richard, Richard!

Richard. Not Richard. I am the Lord of Northumberland. Earl Henry is dead. Edmund is—I killed him, I killed him!

Edmund. No, Richard, Edmund lives. I am Edmund, your cousin.

Richard. Away, away! Innocent blood, innocent blood.

Edmund. Absolution—God's pardon before you die. Are you sorry for your sins?

Richard. (Feebly.) My sins, my soul! My sins, my soul! (Stronger.) I must not die! "Within twenty-four hours." (Raising himself in terror.) Save me, save me! (Falling back.) Oh—oh—I am lost! (Dies. Edmund in deep sorrow. Tramping of feet is heard outside at L.)

Captain Cromwell. (Outside.) Be alert, men, the traitor must be near.

Edmund. (Looking towards heaven.) My God, I will die for Thee, and live forever. (Rises and advances towards L, to centre of stage. Captain and many soldiers rush in, followed timidly by some peasants, men and children.)

Captain. (To Edmund.) Ah! Caught! This time you shall not escape. (To soldiers.) Men-at-arms, the Sheriff's orders are to lead the prisoners directly to execution at Tyburn. Surround the rebel-priest. (Soldiers gather about Edmund, but in such a way as to allow the audience an unobstructed view of him. Edmund, looking up to heaven, prays silently.)

Captain. (Sees body of Richard.) Richard, the new Earl of Northumberland! Dead! (Pointing at Edmund.) Can he be the murderer? (To soldiers.) Latimer and London, remain here, and guard this body till the proper authorities arrive and order its removal. (Two soldiers advance and stand guard over the body of Richard. A light from heaven shines upon Edmund—he falls to his knees. The peasants, particularly the children, draw near to Edmund, and gaze on him with awe.)

Captain. (Addressing Edmund.) Finish your prayer quickly—it shall be your last.

(The following picture should be made as joyful and impressive as possible, to dissipate the gloom of Richard's death. A spot-light from above should be cast on Edmund. If possible, two angels may appear on high, one holding a crown, the other a palm. Angel voices sing: Rejoice, rejoice! Thine is the crown of victory. Rejoice, rejoice, alleluja!)

Edmund. (In rapture. Gentle music.)
Heaven! Angels' voices! A crown, a palm!
The white-robed martyrs! Prior John! My
mother! Ah, is my father saved? Thanks be
to God! Now dost Thou dismiss Thy servant,
O Lord, according to Thy word in peace.

TABLEAU.



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